

RODGER COLEMAN & SAM BYRD:
COSMOLOGIES (2014)
NuVoid Jazz Records (NV 1401-1)

Rodger Coleman began piano lessons at the age of seven, eventually studying for eight years with Dr. Allen Brings while also learning the clarinet and other woodwinds under the direction of Gary Sousa and singing in the choir at school. At the New England Conservatory of Music, Rodger studied "Third Stream" music with Ran Blake, Hankus Netsky and Bob Moses but, after falling in love with punk rock, Rodger picked up the electric guitar, began taking lessons with Mick Goodrick and experimenting with fellow students in a punk/jazz hybrid that would eventually become UYA (a/k/a Upstanding Young Americans). With the arrival of drummer, Sam Byrd, in 1989 they became a real band, playing late-night gigs in Boston nightclubs.

Sam had been a member of several ensembles in and around Richmond, Virginia, including the mutable collective Tad Thaddock and the short-lived Office Ladies, who made an album for New Alliance, *Brains in Bed Brains and Boots No Boots in Bed* (1989). With Sam now on board, UYA proceeded to record their self-titled CD, which was nominated for a Boston Music Award in 1991. They performed regularly around the Boston area as well as in New York City, including several gigs at the original Knitting Factory. A cassette-only release, *Live at The Willow* (1993), documents the band's onstage prowess. While a follow up album failed to materialize, UYA's punk/jazz rendition of Sun Ra's "Dancing Shadows" appears on *Wavelength Infinity: A Tribute To Sun Ra* (1995) and is still available on CD from Rastascan Records.

After the band split apart, Rodger and his wife moved to Nashville, Tennessee where he re-discovered the piano. A passionate record collector, Rodger also writes about music on his blog, NuVoid.blogspot.com, and has written reviews for the webzine *Spectrum Culture*. Sam returned to Richmond with his wife and two children, where he continues to be an in-demand drummer, playing with local ensembles New Ting Ting Loft, Mindbreath Trio, Joyful Noise Big Band and the Subtle Body Transmission Orchestra. He has also performed with the Sun Ra Arkestra's legendary saxophonists, Marshall Allen and Danny Ray Thompson. Coincidentally, Sam's wife has family in Nashville and, once a year or so, he and Rodger are able to get together and make music.

On September 6, 2012, Rodger and Sam performed in public together for the first time since 1995 at "Indeterminacies" in Nashville and a CD was released in 2013 as *Indeterminate (Improvisations for Piano and Drums)* on NuVoid Jazz Records. Their latest release, *Cosmologies*, further refines the piano/drums approach found on *Indeterminate* and was recorded at Rodger's home studio in December 2013. Mastered especially for vinyl by legendary engineer Richard Dodd, *Cosmologies* is available on limited edition 180-gram LP and is housed in a stunning, hand-pulled letterpress cover designed by Griffin Norman. Intense, intimate and honest, this is "music as seismograph," notes Rodger. "Our long shared musical history has built up the trust and affection which allows us to telepathically communicate our most personal, inchoate thoughts and feelings in an unmediated, free improvisation."

Currently, Rodger and Sam are working on a new album which re-incorporates the guitar and other electronics into the duo's sound world. Some of this material will be premiered at a rare live performance at the series Free Form Friday held at Centennial Black Box Theater in Centennial Park, Nashville on May 15, 2015.

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